



# HAZELDEN

*A part of the Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation*

*Research Update* is published by the Butler Center for Research to share significant scientific findings from the field of addiction treatment research.

## RESEARCHUPDATE

BUTLER CENTER FOR RESEARCH APRIL 2014

# Helping Families Cope with Substance Dependence

Alcohol and drug dependence impacts millions of people each year. Not only do individuals with addiction suffer, but family and friends frequently experience depression, anxiety, and stress.<sup>1,2,3</sup> Research findings suggest self-help groups and professional interventions are effective in helping family members and friends cope with the impact of a loved one's addiction.

### Self-Help Groups

Al-Anon, the family counterpart to Alcoholics Anonymous, is a fellowship of people who have been affected by a loved one's addiction. Founded in 1951, Al-Anon and its related group for teenagers, Alateen, have grown to over 24,000 meetings in 131 countries.<sup>4</sup> Adult Children of Alcoholics (ACOA) is also a source of help, with over 1,500 groups worldwide.<sup>5</sup>

These organizations view alcoholism and drug dependence as a disease that can cause fear, resentment, anger, and loneliness among family members and significant others. Based on the Twelve Step philosophy of Alcoholics Anonymous, these groups provide an opportunity for relatives and friends to discuss their experiences and offer support and encouragement to one another. Research findings indicate Al-Anon and ACOA are effective in easing the stress associated with having a loved one with alcohol or drug dependence.

Studies indicate that significant others who participate in Al-Anon report improvement in physical and mental health, self-esteem, and social as well as family functioning.<sup>6</sup> In a study by Rychtarik and McGillicuddy (2005), women of alcohol-dependent partners who engaged in an Al-Anon facilitation program reported less depression and anxiety than women assigned to a wait-list control group.<sup>7</sup> In a separate study of ACOA participants conducted by Kingree (2000), increases in self-esteem and reductions in self-stigmatization—the tendency to negatively evaluate oneself as a result of being a child of an alcoholic—were observed.<sup>8</sup>

While the majority of studies lack control groups, which makes it difficult to form scientific conclusions, the preliminary data discussed above are encouraging because they suggest a positive impact from attendance at support groups such as Al-Anon and ACOA.

### Professional Intervention

Professionally led groups and treatment programs are also helpful for the relatives and friends of alcohol- and drug-dependent people. One study found significant improvement in psychological symptoms and coping behaviors after a 12-week primary care intervention for family members affected by the alcohol and drug problems of a close relative.<sup>9</sup>

Treatment of alcohol- and drug-abusing youth within a family context can benefit the family as a whole. In a randomized study of Multidimensional Family Therapy (MDFT) conducted by Liddle and colleagues (2009), 83 adolescents were assigned to MDFT or a standard group therapy condition. Adolescents in the MDFT group reported significantly greater increases in positive family interactions compared to the standard therapy group.<sup>10</sup>

Meyers and colleagues (1998) developed a professionally led method called Community Reinforcement and Family Training (CRAFT), specifically for family members. CRAFT assists

### THE HAZELDEN EXPERIENCE

Drs. Robert Meyers and Howard Liddle, whose work is reviewed in this issue, received the Dan Anderson Research Award from the Butler Center for Research in 2002 and 2003, respectively. Hazelden publishes Dr. Meyers' self-help book, *Get Your Loved One Sober: Alternatives to Nagging, Pleading, and Threatening*.

### CONTROVERSIES & QUESTIONS

#### *Where can family members find help?*

Many treatment centers, including the Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation, offer programs for relatives and friends of substance-dependent people. For example, the Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation's Family Programs offer assistance specifically tailored to parents, siblings, and children affected by a loved one with an alcohol or drug abuse problem. Through these programs attendees gain a better understanding of addiction, treatment, recovery, and family dynamics. Participants learn what they can do to promote their well-being and find new and healthy ways of coping with their loved one's illness.

#### *What happens to the family when the substance dependent person stops drinking or using?*

Troubled families may believe their problems will be resolved once the substance-dependent person stops drinking or using. Recovery can bring a new set of issues and can be a tumultuous time as everyone adjusts to a new way of living. Families may find professional counseling or the support available through Al-Anon and other groups to be helpful in the transition.

### HOW TO USE THIS INFORMATION

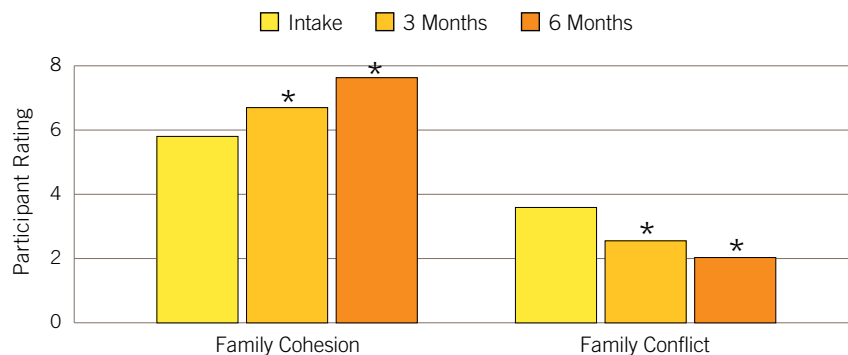
- **Family Members:** Help for you exists, too, and can be effective in reducing the stress and other difficulties you may be experiencing associated with a loved one's alcohol and drug addiction.
- **Clinicians:** Provide support to the family and significant others of substance-dependent people. Familiarize yourself with specialized resources in your community and refer when appropriate.
- **Researchers:** Continue to develop and evaluate methods to provide help for family members and significant others.

## Helping Families Cope with Substance Dependence

family members and partners in helping their alcohol- and drug-abusing loved ones enter treatment.<sup>11</sup> Research conducted on CRAFT, suggests the program is effective in increasing the likelihood of treatment entry among treatment resistant individuals.<sup>12</sup>

In addition to behavioral skills training designed specifically to facilitate their loved one's entry into treatment, concerned significant others (CSOs) who participate in CRAFT learn adaptive skills that improve the quality of their lives. In a randomized clinical study, Manuel and colleagues (2012) examined the efficacy of CRAFT among 40 CSOs. Participants showed a significant improvement in family cohesion and a significant decrease in family conflict 3 and 6 months following CRAFT programming (see Figure).<sup>13</sup> In an earlier study of 62 CSOs, significant drops in depression, anger, and anxiety occurred among CSOs during and following the course of a 12-session CRAFT program.<sup>11</sup>

### Changes in family cohesion and family conflict among participants in the CRAFT program



\* $p < 0.05$ . Indicates a significant difference in self-reported ratings of family cohesion and family conflict at the 3- and 6-month follow-up period compared to intake (pretreatment).

SOURCE: Manuel, J. K., Austin, J. L., Miller, W. R., McCrady, B. S., Tonigan, J. S., Meyers, R. J., Smith, J. E., & Bogenschutz, M. P. (2012). Community Reinforcement and Family Training: A pilot comparison of group and self-directed delivery. *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment*, 43(1), 129–136.

### Summary

Family and friends of substance-dependent people are often negatively impacted by their loved one's illness. Research shows that therapy and self-help groups are helpful resources. Whether through professional treatment, a self-help program of mutual support, or a combination of both, help is available to ease stress and improve the lives of those coping with the substance dependence of a loved one.

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The Butler Center for Research informs and improves recovery services and produces research that benefits the field of addiction treatment. We are dedicated to conducting clinical research, collaborating with external researchers, and communicating scientific findings.

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